The Free Man

Self-Reflection of a Conscientious Life

A Short Story

By

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How To Quote From Books?

Whenever you want to quote something from a book, use the page number, line number and word number.

So, the three basic numbers are,

1. Page Number
2. Line Number
3. Word number

Please note that the “Line Number” in here is the line number of a page. All valid lines should at least include one word in it. Also, line numbering does not count the header, footer or any footnote in that page. So, out of the content of that page, starting with number 1 from top to bottom, any line with at least one word in it, is a valid line.

How To Quote From Books?

Also note that the word number is, the number of the word in a line. In each line, word count starts with number 1 from left to right.

Based on the published versions, there are two additional numbers to consider when quoting from a book. Those are,

1. Edition Number (You may use the ISBN or ASIN if editions have separate numbers)
2. Volume Number

Please read this whole section to the end to read about the explanation on how to use these numbers to quote from a book.

Let's look at basic ways of quoting something from the book. For example, if I want to quote the word "*Book*" in the title of this section, then you may quote it as follows,

"*The Free Man: Page i: Line 1: Word 5*" or "*The Free Man: i:1:5*". This is equal to the word "*Book*".

If you want to quote the whole title of this section at once, then use a word range from the first word to the last word of the title as follows,

"*The Free Man: Page i: Line 1: Word 1 to Page i: Line 1: Word 5*" or "*The Free Man: i:1:1—i:1:5*". This quotation is the same as quoting the sentence: "*How to Quote from Books?*"

In the same way, you may quote as many words, lines and pages as needed at once.

To quote a range of pages, use the following method,

"*The Free Man: Page i to Page vi*" or "*The Free Man: i—vi*". This is equal to the six pages which contain this whole section called "*How to Quote from Books?*".

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"*The Free Man: Page i, Page vi*" or "*The Free Man: i, vi*". This quote is equal to two pages numbered '*i*' and '*vi*' which contains the first and the last page of this section on "*How To Quote From Books?*". You may also use a combination of comma-separated page numbers and page ranges to quote everything you want at once.

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"*The Free Man: Page i: Line 2, Line 3*" or "*The Free Man: i:2,3*". This quote also equals to the two lines which contain the first paragraph of this section. You may also use a combination of comma-separated line numbers and line ranges to quote everything you want at once.

So, the most complex form of a quote you can make with this method is to point to some content in a book that starts with one specific word and ends with another specific word, as follows,

"*The Free Man: Page i: Line 2: Word 1 to Page i: Line 03: Word 8*" or "*The Free Man: i:2:1—i:3:8*". This quote also

equals to the first paragraph of this section which only has two lines.

This manner of quoting will make sure everyone from everywhere refers to the same content of a book while quoting from its content.

If there are multiple editions of a book, then you may also mention the edition number along with the title of the book itself. For example, to quote from the first edition of the book, use the following method,

"*The Free Man—First Edition: Page i: Line 2: Word 1 to Page i: Line 03: Word 8*" or "*The Free Man—1st Ed.: i:2:1—i:3:8*". This quote also equal to the first paragraph of this section called "*How To Quote From Books?*" in the first edition of this book titled "*The Free Man*".

Similarly, if you are reading a split edition, which means a book that is published in multiple volumes, then please refer to the volume number after the edition number. For example, to quote from the first volume of the first edition, use the following method,

How To Quote From Books?

"*The Free Man—First Edition—Volume I: Page i: Line 2: Word 1 to Page i: Line 03: Word 8*" or "*The Free Man—1st Ed.—Vol. I: i:2:1—i:3:8*". This quote also equal to the first paragraph of this section called "*How To Quote From Books?*" in the first volume of the first edition of this book titled "*The Free Man*".

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Please note that when the edition number is not present along with the title of the book, consider that quote is from the first edition of the book. Therefore, whoever is quoting from a later edition of the book other than the first edition must include the edition number or edition name along with the title of the book. This is a must when someone is quoting from a book using this method.

About This Book

This short story is about a socially isolated man having a self-reflective extinct crisis of his life.

The Free Man is one of the many short stories in a short story collection which belongs to another book yet to be published. I hope this short story might draw your attention to the upcoming book and you will become more curious about what the actual book is all about!

This is the sixth (the last) out of six thought-provoking short stories to be released before the main book. Each short story will reveal and discuss certain aspects of current social issues and trends. Starting from April 2019, each book will be released bimonthly within the first week of the month.

Dedication

I Dedicate This Book To Everyone
And Everything That Is Existing,
Ever Existed And Will Someday
Come Into Existence.

[Author intentionally left this page blank]

The Free Man

Self-Reflection of a Conscientious Life

A man who was a previous employee of the company, eagerly waiting at the lobby for his interview. He seems to be anxious but talks fine when interacting with others in the lobby.

Suddenly, the last person to walk in for the interview comes out and leaves the lobby. He didn't seem to be happy about it, or probably he's just confused about the outcome.

Now it's his turn. The interviewer called his name and he stands up and picks up his file and walks into the interviewing room. A smart and a pretty looking lady is waiting on the other side of the table. She didn't seem to care about greeting people in and welcoming them to

interview. Probably having a tedious day. She breaks the silence,

[The Pretty Lady]
“Hi, how are you? Please take a seat”

[The Man]
“Thank you”

[The Pretty Lady]
“So, you were an employee here, right?”

[The Man]
“Yes, I was. I worked for eight years for the company”

[The Pretty Lady]
“Oh, I see then a ten-year gap. That’s OK. So, how are you doing now?”

It seems like she’s going through his file very slowly reading almost everything in there.

[The Man]

“Not too bad, I’m trying to put everything back together. These days I’m looking for a job”

[The Pretty Lady]
“Yeah. Life is probably the worst detention. If you want to punish someone, give that person life. It’s like a lifetime of psychological torture.”

[The Man]
“What do you mean?”

[The Pretty Lady]
“No, I’m just saying… Never mind. It seems like you’ve been through a lot. How did your previous interviews go”

[The Man]
“Ho do you know about them?”

[The Pretty Lady]
“This is not the first time you applied here after your release, am I correct?”

[The Man]
“Yes”

[The Pretty Lady]
“So, you’ve been here several times. I just don’t understand why you are keep getting called in for interviews. What happened last time?”

[The Man]
“Nothing much, I didn’t get selected”

[The Pretty Lady]
“Any luck, outside of this company? AI mean did you apply for other companies?”

[The Man]
“Yes, but it’s worse out there. At least, in here, I’m getting called for an interview.”

[The Pretty Lady]
“Oh! I’m sorry to hear that.”

[The Man]

“No, that’s okay, I’m used to that now.”

[The Pretty Lady]

She closes his file and tries to look him in the eye. It seems like he’s already given up, he keeps looking down at the table top. He didn’t notice she’s looking at him.

[The Man]

“I’m sorry, but I think you already know what I’m about to say”

[The Pretty Lady]

He looks up at her and it seems like he already expected that but he seems fed up with all the rejection.

[The Man]

“Yeah, yeah, I know. You can’t give me the job, right?”

[The Pretty Lady]

“Yes, I’m sorry but I can’t do much about it”

[The Man]
“Can you at least tell me why?”

[The Pretty Lady]
“You already know why…”

[The Man]
“It’s something I’ve done ten years ago. I served ten years in prison for it and now I’m a Free Man!”

[The Pretty Lady]
“There’s nothing legal to prevent you from getting a job. It’s just we can’t offer you a job. You may apply for other companies and try applying again for a different position”

[The Man]
“That’s the answer I always get. You never tell me why. Why don’t you just tell me what’s wrong with me if there’s nothing legal prevents you from giving me a job?”

[The Pretty Lady]
“I’m sorry, this is all I can say”

[The Man]
"Just do me a favour. Please tell me why do you treat me like this!"

[The Pretty Lady]
"Do you really want an honest answer?"

[The Man]
"Yes please."

[The Pretty Lady]
"I don't want to be rude but if you really want me to tell you the truth I can help you understand"

[The Man]
"I don't mind you being rude. Just tell me the whole reason behind it. Not just the final outcome of it."

[The Pretty Lady]
"Just remember, you are asking for this"

[The Man]
“OK, OK just go on…”

[The Pretty Lady]
“The main reason is we can’t trust you. Honestly speaking, I can’t pass you through to the next phase because I can’t trust you”

[The Man]
“Why can’t you trust me?”

[The Pretty Lady]
“It’s nothing personal. It’s just we can’t accept any person who might be a treat to other employees. According to me, you come under that category”

[The Man]
“I’m not a treat. Why do you think I’m dangerous? That happened ten years ago and I’ve been imprisoned for that. Then I got released. While I was in there I’ve been rehabilitated. Isn’t that enough?”

[The Pretty Lady]
“I’m afraid not”

[The Man]
“Why?”

[The Pretty Lady]
“As I said once, we can’t trust you. For the sake of the safety of everyone else I can’t pass you through”

[The Man]
“I’m not going to hurt anyone. If I want to I can hurt you now. But I don’t. Why don’t you let me move on”

[The Pretty Lady]
“I’m sorry, it’s nothing personal. I don’t think you are an immediate threat but we can’t take the risk of putting others lives in danger”

[The Man]
“Why? Why do you think I’m still a treat? After everything I’ve been through.”

[The Pretty Lady]
“OK, do you remember what you’ve done ten years ago?”

[The Man]
“Yes, why not?”

[The Pretty Lady]
“Are you comfortable talking about it?”

[The Man]
“It’s okay. I don’t mind talking about it. I’m through that already.”

[The Pretty Lady]
“OK then, did you do it on purpose? I mean did you intentionally do it?”

[The Man]
“No! I mean yes… Why? Are you interrogating me now?”

[The Pretty Lady]

“I’m not. But in order to answer your question, I need to know some things first. So let me ask you again. Did you intended to kill that person before killing him?”

[The Man]
“Yes”

[The Pretty Lady]
“That means you are guilty of the crime.”

[The Man]
“Isn’t that obvious. I served ten years and I never complained about it”

[The Pretty Lady]
“That’s not what I meant. Actually doing something like such on purpose means you still pose a security risk under certain conditions”

[The Man]
“You don’t even know why I did that! Don’t talk like you know everything! Don’t you ask why I did it”

[The Pretty Lady]
“It doesn’t matter. I already know why you might’ve done it”

[The Man]
“How do you know?”

[The Pretty Lady]
“I don’t know the exact reason but I can understand the probable causes. There are only a few”

[The Man]
“Like what?”

[The Pretty Lady]
“A person kills another person either to protect himself or to protect someone else. In extreme scenarios, he might do it due to anger he’s been harbouring for a long time. If it’s not an accident then those were the probable causes. So what was yours?”

[The Man]
“What?”

[The Pretty Lady]
“Out of those causes what was your cause?”

[The Man]
“Can you tell me those again. I didn’t exactly catch what you were saying?”

[The Pretty Lady]
“Okay. If it was not an accident, then, one, you did it to protect yourself. Two, you did it to protect someone else, or protect millions of others, I don’t care. Three, you did it out of anger, even though there was no immediate threat to you or to anyone else from that person. Is your reason comes under any of these three reasons?”

[The Man]
“Yes”

[The Pretty Lady]

"Then that's enough for me."

[The Man]
"So, how does that make someone dangerous? Many people kill to save themselves or to save lots of innocent people. Then armies and police should be more dangerous than anyone else!"

[The Pretty Lady]
"Yes! they are? But they are trained for it and have some form of discipline. Also, they don't do it for personal reasons."

[The Man]
"But still then intentionally do it"

[The Pretty Lady]
"Yes, but we look at it in a different way. But still, in my personal opinion, anyone who has killed another is dangerous"

[The Man]

“Why do you say that?”

[The Pretty Lady]
“OK, do you remember the causes I mentioned earlier? In the first two options, you do it to save yourself or to save someone else. This is the most common category, even armies and police do things for this reason. This means you do things with a sudden burst of anger and has no control over it. If you do it as the last option, then still you value someone’s lifeless over someone else’s.”

[The Man]
“Can you explain it?”

[The Pretty Lady]
“Well, when you meet people who have no control over what they say, we tend to say that these people have no filters. They just say things out of anger or based on any other emotion or feeling they go through. They can’t consciously control what they say. We dislike such people, aren’t we? So, apply this to your actions. People who don’t have control over their body and its actions tend to do

things based on their emotions and feelings. They don't filter their actions, as you can see, this is dangerous. More dangerous than having no control over your mouth"

[The Man]
"So…"

[The Pretty Lady]
"This means you are like a time bomb. With the right conditions, you can burst again. As you can see, we can't work well while a time bomb walks among us. With regards to third cause, it's worse, because you know what's right and wrong, you have the time to choose not to do it, but still, you go ahead and do it. This means you lack a moral core."

[The Man]
"What?"

[The Pretty Lady]
"That means your right and wrong depends on the situation. Your moral core is not solid but varies over

different conditions. You bend rules to do what you want to do. Your morality is temporary. This makes you a psychopath. As you can see, we can't work with a psychopath as well."

[The Man]
"OK, I had enough. Thanks for the interview"

The lady suddenly came to senses and become aware of the situation. It's like she's been through a long journey while she was interviewing that person.

[The Pretty Lady]
"I hope I made things clear. I'm sorry I didn't mean to be rude"

[The Man]
"Oh! Now you are sorry. Are you scared of me?"

[The Pretty Lady]
"No, I'm just saying"

[The Man]
"It's okay. Thanks for the explanation. So how long will it take for me to become normal again?"

[The Pretty Lady]
"Honestly, I don't know. Because when it comes to the legal terms, you are already a normal person. It's just we are not ready to accept that, yet."

[The Man]
"So, how long?"

[The Pretty Lady]
"At what age did you commit this crime?"

[The Man]
"I was thirty"

[The Pretty Lady]
"OK, to be safe let's say after thirty-eight years from the date of your crime."

[The Man]
“Why thirty-eight?”

[The Pretty Lady]
“Your peak seemed to occur when you were thirty so with all the tolerance and to be on the safe side, I just said thirty-eight”

[The Man]
“Why thirty-eight? Why not thirty-nine or thirty-seven?”

[The Pretty Lady]
“Just trust me on that”

[The Man]
“So what happens to ten years of prison”

[The Pretty Lady]
“Since you go to prison soon after what you’ve done, I guess now you’ve already passed ten years out of thirty-eight. So in another twenty-eight years you may apply. Which means at the age of sixty-eight”

[The Man]
"That's well past the retirement age!"

[The Pretty Lady]
"I'm sorry, but I can't help you with that"

[The Man]
"Is what you are saying in company policy?"

[The Pretty Lady]
"No, it's something I just come up with. Since I'm handling the recruitment it becomes company policy"

[The Man]
"So what happens to you if you kill someone. Will your company treat you the same"

[The Pretty Lady]
"I don't know. It depends on who handles it. But I'm sure that most will not trust me and I'll be out these same as you"

[The Man]
“How can you trust me after thirty-eight years? What if I do something bad afterwards”

[The Pretty Lady]
“That’s a risk I’m willing to take to give someone, who waited long enough to regain trust, an opportunity”

[The Man]
“What if I wait for that long just to come in and kill you all”

[The Pretty Lady]
“Is that a treat”

[The Man]
“No, I’m just asking”

[The Pretty Lady]
“You are inside the company right now. You can come in anytime you want for various reasons. You can always come here and talk to us if you want. If you want to kill us all, you

don't have to wait that long, do you?"

[The Man]
"Yeah true, but then why you don't think like that when recruiting me"

[The Pretty Lady]
"It's just you coming in once and killing us all is not the same as accepting you to our workforce, trusting you, knowing you can be unstable. That's a risk I can't take and I don't want to be the one who makes that decision. "

[The Man]
"Oh! I get it, you just want to be safe than sorry."

[The Pretty Lady]
"Exactly!"

[The Man]
"Thank you very much for your feedback. I learned a lot today."

[The Pretty Lady]
"I'm glad I could help. I wish you all the best."

[The Man]
"Thanks. I'll see you around in outside"

She seems puzzled and a bit confused about what he said.

[The Pretty Lady]
"Is that a threat?"

[The Man]
"Oh! No, no don't misunderstand. I meant I might see you around in outside since I might not come back here for a long time. So, I might talk to you if I see you outside"

[The Pretty Lady]
"Oh! I'm sorry. Sure"

[The Man]
"It's OK. Given my record, most people tend to misunderstand what I say. Most of them are cautious. I'm

familiar with that, too”

[The Pretty Lady]
“Oh! Good to know that.”

[The Man]
“Goodbye!”

[The Pretty Lady]
“Bye”

After the interview, the man exited the company premises and started walking. He was walking for hours, most of the time talking to himself, along the road without knowing where he’s going. After a few hours, he suddenly realises that he was walking for hours and standing in the middle of nowhere. He decided to go to the monastery nearby the place he stayed.

He took a bus back to his place and got off from the bus stop near the monastery. He didn’t waste any time, walked directly into the monastery. He saw few monks walking and

talking to other people, some were working to clean up the monastery area. He noticed a familiar face among them, a well-known monk, who is popular among people around his place. He headed directly towards him and asked,

[The Man]
"Can I talk to you for few minutes, venerable sir?"

[The Monk]
"Yes! Please come with me to worship area. There we can sit and talk. I've been standing for all day."

[The Man]
"Sure"

[The Monk]
They walked towards the worship area and sat on a bench near the boo tree. It was a pleasant day and the environment is nice and calm for a nice conversation.

[The Monk]
"So, what do you want to talk about?"

[The Man]
"I have few questions, I want to know the answers and clarify some of the things according to Dharma. Can you please help me with that?"

[The Monk]
"Sure, why not?"

[The Man]
"To begin with, do you believe in tree gods, venerable sir?"

[The Monk]
"If I say I do, then you'd ask me how do I know. If I say I don't, then you'd ask me how do I know for sure. So, I would say I do not know. That's one of the least of my concerns"

[The Man]
"OK, let's just assume there are. If there are tree gods on a tree in a forest, is that illegal?"

The monk was puzzled.

[The Monk]
"How so?"

[The Man]
"The forest belongs to the government. And the government doesn't like anyone else in their forest. Unless the government doesn't sell or lease a property, no one can live there. So, that makes that tree God an unauthorized illegal dweller, am I wrong?"

[The Monk]
"In that sense, yes. But the government is a human government. But when it comes to handling all sentient beings it does have the control. But how do you know that government employees can see that tree God?"

[The Man]
"So, does inability to see makes it a lesser crime? Or just because the tree God is invisible, does it suddenly becomes legitimate?"

[The Monk]
“A good question. So what you are asking is if humans control the land, whether living visibly or invisibly among them on their land is illegal or not?”

[The Man]
“Yes”

[The Monk]
“I can give an honest answer as a human but since I don’t have any experience with other planes of existence, I cannot give a full answer to that question.”

[The Man]
“It’s OK. Tell me what you think. “

[The Monk]
“According to Buddhism, Buddha didn’t commit any crime knowingly or unknowingly. I mean according to scriptures he didn’t secretly commit any crimes. So if someone, even a deity, commits a crime secretly but knowing it’s a crime, it’s still a crime. But in this scenario, what we are aware is

human laws. What if those planes of existence have their own set of laws? What if that we are dwelling illegally among them?"

[The Man]
"I didn't think that way"

[The Monk]
"Yes, I know. The reason is we as humans make rules for humans. So in the human plane, certain laws exist and different people, governments and organizations own and controls the land. But we can't say, that ownership is the same across all other planes. That's what I think"

[The Man]
"Oh, I understand"

[The Monk]
"But if someone decides to switch the planes then who owns that land becomes questionable. So any deity or any other who lives in the human plane under human laws are bound by it if they decide to live among humans. In that

sense, that tree God is committing a crime"

[The Man]
"Thanks. Isn't that mango tree full of ripe mangoes?"

[The Monk]
"Yes, it is"

[The Man]
"Don't you sell the harvest, so that it doesn't go to waste"

[The Monk]
"It is not going to waste, birds and all sorts of animals, sometimes even us, consume them"

[The Man]
"So you don't see all those mangoes under the tree as a waste?"

[The Monk]
"Not really. But I can understand some temples might decide to sell the harvest due to financial hardship. It's true

there are some hard places where monks have to earn for themselves in order to survive, maintain and develop”

[The Man]
“If so, is that a crime?”

[The Monk]
“Honestly speaking, in some sense it might be but when it comes to existential questions, from a human perspective, it might be considered as an okay thing to do. I honestly don’t have a solid opinion on that. It’s a blurred area in the dharma as well. How do we support ourselves until we understand the truth if the environment doesn’t support us? is a debatable question”

[The Man]
“What can a monk do, when there’s an emergency or a sudden need for money? Can you get a loan using monastery property? Is it allowed?”

[The Monk]
“Honestly, I don’t know what others would do. But in

human laws, someone has to have ownership of the property. So the head of that monastery is always the one who owns the property. When the new head is appointed the ownership is transferred. However, as a religious body, all those properties that were given to the Buddhism belong to Buddhism. But there's is no organization called Buddhism because it's a philosophy and Buddha is not alive. Therefore, individual heads maintain the properties in the name of Buddhism"

[The Man]
"So, in reality, no one really owns those properties?"

[The Monk]
"In some sense yes, no one owns those properties. It's just a random section of land for the preservation and promotion of Buddhism"

[The Man]
"So no one can use those to take a loan?"

[The Monk]

"In human laws, I think the head who owns the property can. Because as far as I know there's no law preventing that. But how can someone like that repay the loan? So, based on that side of the story, I don't think anyone is allowed to"

[The Man]
"Assuming it's allowed, is that go against Buddhist morality?"

[The Monk]
"Most of the time intentions are what matters. People do things for various reasons. But monks are not businessmen. So if someone does something like that in a way a businessman does it, then it's against the Buddhist morality as I can think of it."

[The Man]
"So, according to what I can understand from what you are saying the land and any harvest you get from that land, legally belongs to the head of the monastery. However, as a whole everything belongs to Buddhism which is a

philosophy. Am I correct?"

[The Monk]
"I can't see anything wrong with that."

[The Man]
"OK, then what happens when any or all of those properties come under a threat?"

"Then, we normally go according to the human laws of the country"

[The Man]
"If it's a worse kind of a situation, where there is a war or something? I mean what if people try to take the land by force for their use, and law can do nothing about it?"

[The Monk]
"It varies based on personality. Some stay and fight while some might decide to take a non-violent approach and leave the place."

[The Man]
"But isn't both ways against the Buddhism? I mean fighting over land and giving up so easily are not traits of Buddhist monks, isn't it?"

[The Monk]
"Yes, fighting means clinging to land which is a materialistic thing. But leaving behind land non-violently means to show their detachment from materialistic possessions. So, I don't think leaving is a weak thing. Monks don't usually give up in non-materialistic endeavours but might consider fighting over materialistic possessions is a waste of time."

[The Man]
"I understand. But even to go through some form of a non-materialistic endeavour one should have a piece of land, to begin with, isn't it?"

[The Monk]
"Yes, there has to be some place where your physical body can exist"

[The Man]
"So, what if all the land belongs to other people and governments and you have no land whatsoever to begin your non-materialistic, to begin with?"

[The Monk]
"That's a good question. I never thought about it. Maybe because we live in a Buddhist country and there is plenty of room here for Buddhist monks to begin their journey. As you said, in a place where no land exists and all land should be owned before use, a philosophy such as Buddhism might struggle to flourish. However, Buddhism has always been a philosophy that depends on what other people give. No one to give means it is not a good condition to Buddhism to flourish. "

[The Man]
"So, if Buddhism and Buddhists decide to leave a community just because they don't or can't give anything for Buddhism, isn't that like giving up on those people due to materialistic possessions?"

[The Monk]
"Another good question, you may think it as giving up on people because they don't give anything. It's like expecting something in return to give something back. That is against Buddhism as it's "dhana" is all about giving expecting nothing in return. However, you have to understand that monks as humans have to live in order to give what they know. If there's no suitable condition to live, they might withdraw because otherwise, they may have to become like businessmen just to survive in there, which is against Buddhist precepts."

[The Man]
"So, basically, you think withdrawal is better than becoming businessmen just for the sake of people who might need the help of Buddhism?"

[The Monk]
"When you put it like that, it seems like a bad thing to do, but still if we are to follow Buddhist precepts, we have to refrain from monetary transactions which are highly debatable in this kind of society."

[The Man]
“I don’t know but it seems not right. Something is not right. Something is missing. I’m not saying Buddhist precepts are wrong but it doesn’t add up and sometimes doesn’t live up to a philosophy that one can follow in this society”

[The Monk]
“What do you mean?”

[The Man]
“You said that living on donations, detached from materialistic possessions, non-violently withdrawing when circumstances are not right, seems too passive. Which is an impossible way of existence when it comes to a society governs by materialism.”

[The Monk]
“If you can see into past, you might understand there’s always room for survival in one place or the other. It’s just a matter of finding the right place in right time.”

[The Man]
"But what if we couldn't find it on time? Isn't it logical to stay and fight for what we already have?"

[The Monk]
"Yes, it's logical but up to what extent? All that you worked for becoming useless the soon you start fighting for materialistic possessions"

[The Man]
"Oh! I get it. You'd rather keep your core intact than losing it to hold the ground"

[The Monk]
"In a way, yes. Isn't that more important than the ground itself?"

[The Man]
"Yes, but when there's no ground, that core doesn't give me a place to live!"

[The Monk]

"I understand what you are saying, I haven't thought into that extreme."

[The Man]
"Think form a homeless man's perspective"

[The Monk]
"Oh! Now I get it. That's what you're trying to tell. So your question is when you're homeless, is it worth protecting the moral core you have because it doesn't give you a place to stay?"

[The Man]
"Something like that"

[The Monk]
"You know that some people voluntarily become homeless to understand the truth, right?"

[The Man]
"Yes, but they always end up in monasteries and ashrams. What if there's none for what they believe in?"

[The Monk]
“Good point, but not all truth seekers end up that way.”

[The Man]
“Is it a good way to find the truth? Or are they making it harder than they should?”

[The Monk]
“You are asking a monk, so yeah, make things harder than it should in your opinion.”

[The Man]
“Am I right?”

[The Monk]
“It depends. What if we don’t take it as making things harder? What if we think it’s easier this way with fewer attachments?”

[The Man]
“Yes, but less doesn’t mean none”

[The Monk]
“Yes. What do you mean?”

[The Man]
“I mean if you don’t have an attachment to this monastery, will you be able to follow your path? In short, if you don’t have a place to stay, will your path to finding the truth be the same as this?”

[The Monk]
“Again you come to the previous point. What are you trying to say”

[The Man]
“Assume that a person has no place to live or losing the place that person has. Is it wrong for that person to use force to find a place and stay in it? Or to protect the place he or she is about to lose? You might say human life is worth more than a piece of land, but can a homeless man who has nowhere to live, who’s been continuously treated in a bad way due to not having a place to live can

comprehend such a thing?"

[The Monk]
"I honestly don't know how to answer that. I can tell you that killing someone over a piece of land is no worth at all. Because then you know forever, as long as you live there, that you killed someone over it. But in extreme conditions of losing or not having a place people might act differently."

[The Man]
"How would a monk act?"

[The Monk]
"As non-violently as possible"

[The Man]
"What if you've been treated as another homeless man? Not a monk?"

[The Monk]
"It depends on the motivation. Monks have a different goal. Their goal is not to own land but to know the truth and

understand and reach the supreme state. But a motivation of a homeless man is survival, finding food and a place to stay."

[The Man]
"You are saying that there's no way a monk, over time, grow a need for food and a place to stay over whatever the truth they are after"

[The Monk]
"I don't know. It depends. It depends on how far you are willing to go to find the truth. After a while, you might lose it altogether and start wanting the same things as a homeless man does. But that means he hasn't given up on materialism yet, he still clings to something. Maybe out of fear, or pain or fear of death. Those factors might change people's motivations over time. However, if someone is resilient, I don't think he or she might cling over anything materialistic under any circumstance."

[The Man]
"Thanks but if a normal person commits a crime in a such

an extreme scenario, as the last resort, is that still a crime?"

[The Monk]
"Crime is a crime, regardless of in what conditions you've done it. The main reason you commit a crime is, you put yourself before everyone else in extreme situations. This is expected behaviour but there's always a choice between non-violent and violent approaches. If you take the violent approach, then it might lead to a crime."

[The Man]
"What if there's no non-violent way of handling it? What if the only way possible is to use a violent burst to settle the situation and move forward?"

[The Monk]
"Can you really move forward after that violent burst? Or are you making things worse?"

[The Man]
"Yeah, in a way you are right. But I'm certain there's no non-violent way out"

[The Monk]
“You can always withdraw”

[The Man]
“Withdraw to where? How can you ask a homeless man to withdraw to another place, as if that person has somewhere to withdraw to?”

[The Monk]
“I don’t know. I’m not in your situation. If I were you I might seek help from a nearby monastery or someone else. But in your situation, if there’s no one else to ask help from, you can always ask a monastery for some help”

[The Man]
“Isn’t that temporary? I’m fed up with giving patch up solutions to this problem. Is there a solid way out?”

[The Monk]
“Out there your only way is to work, earn money and buy a place. In here you always depend on donations. I think you

have a problem of authority. You don't work under anyone or like to stay under anyone, do you?"

[The Man]
"Yes"

[The Monk]
"I understand, that makes things harder for a person to live."

"Even I'm under a certain authority. There's a chain of command. There're people above me, I'm under the law, both human and Buddhist laws. Having authority to boss around is fine, I know as I'm the head of this monastery now, but I wasn't before. So I know how you feel. Honestly, I can't help you much with your attitude. What is your father says about this?"

[The Man]
"I don't know him"

[The Monk]

“What do you mean?”

[The Man]

“I never met him, I never knew him”

[The Monk]

“Oh! I’m sorry. Is he dead?”

[The Man]

“No. He’s alive, as far as I know. I just don’t know him”.

[The Monk]

“Did he ever tried to contact you?”

[The Man]

“As far as I know, no he didn’t”

[The Monk]

“What about your mother?”

[The Man]

“Oh! She’s alive and well, went through a second marriage.

Living with her children overseas"

[The Monk]
"Is that a problem?"

[The Man]
"No, not at all. In monetary terms, they helped but had no emotional connection of a sort of a way it should"

[The Monk]
"I understand"

"I'm sorry but I can't help you with everything. I can't say what I would do if I'm in your situation but probably I would try to find a non-violent approach because I don't want to make things worse. Also, I would work on that attitude, so that I can work well with other people. I don't know. I'm not an Arahat or a Buddha, not sure how one an enlightened person would answer."

[The Man]
"Thank you very much for the time you took. I learned a

lot. Is there anything I can do for you or for monastery?"

[The Monk]
"No, nothing much. Don't worry about it. Try to find your place and resolve your situation."

The man took the blessings of the monk and left the monastery.

After leaving the monastery the man walks towards the only open market in the area he lives in. This area has almost all the shops one can get to around that area. Normally all the people visit this place to buy things for their homes and there are only handful of shops scattered here and there which are not part of this open market area. Therefore, almost all the people living near this area comes to this place for their needs.

The man wants to buy something for the dinner and he walks towards a food outlet which he normally buys food from. He rarely cooks these days because he spends most

of the time outside, trying to find some work. So, he made it a habit to buy food from fast food and other low cost restaurants.

When he was walking by other food outlets he passes a peasant who was standing near one of the outlets. He overheard part of the conversation this peasant had with the food outlet manager at the counter. This peasant seemed to be very weak and a bit old. The man wondered why this peasant even here in the first place. Doesn't he have anyone he knows? Doesn't anyone put him in an elderly-care facility? Then he thought of his own situation. No one he knows is around and most of them don't like to communicate with him. No one would even know if he gets into any trouble and probably no one will take him and put him to an elderly-care facility when he gets old. He suddenly become aware and related his situation to this peasant. He is probably seeing at his own fate after few years from now.

Here is what he overheard while he was passing by the peasant,

[The Peasant]

“Sir, can’t you even give a bit of what is left there. I don’t need much, I’m just really hungry and thirsty.”

[The Food Outlet Manager]

“I’m sorry, I told you that I can’t”

[The Peasant]

“Can you give me some water then?”

[The Food Outlet Manager]

“Can’t you get over to the park. There are some water taps in there?”

[The Peasant]

“Can you please give me some?”

[The Food Outlet Manager]

“I’m sorry I can’t.”

[The Peasant]

“Please sir. I can’t walk that far now. I’m tired.”

[The Food Outlet Manager]

"That's what all of you are saying. If I give it to you then all the others will start gathering here asking for this and that. You know that is not good for business. So, now I told you why. Can you please go somewhere else? No one is coming near this place because of you."

[The Peasant]

"I'm sorry sir."

The man overheard that much and by the time he gets to the food outlet he was walking towards, the peasant has walked to the very next food outlet to the one he was before and seems to be having a conversation with that one's manager as well. The man didn't care much, as many peasants are living around here and most of them are doing similar things to get some food with not much luck. However, he haven't seen this peasant before. This one seems to be a new one. He thought to himself that maybe this one travelled here because of the opportunities this place present. Many people come here often so most peasants are well of doing what they do around here than walking around some place else.

The man ordered the usual and waited there until the food is being prepared. Suddenly most people seems to disturbed and he heard people speaking loudly near the entrance. He turned around to see what happened.

[A Stranger]

“Someone please bring some water! Quickly!”

Someone near the entrance is screaming at the crowd. Someone among the crown gave him a water bottle and he seems the pour some water into a mouth of a person who is lying in the ground.

The man who is waiting for his food, walked towards the seen and found that the peasant who was asking for food earlier is lying on the ground and a man near the peasant’s body is trying to give the peasant some water and wake him up. However, it seems like the peasant is too weak to stand up.

Someone has already called the police and the emergency number it seems. The man overhead others speaking about an ambulance is on the way.

After few minutes an ambulance arrived at the scene and two policeman came to the place few minutes after that and started moving people away from the scene. People who came from the ambulance seemed to be trying out some first aid to make the peasant comfortable but suddenly the man stopped breathing. The ambulance crew seemed to be trying hard to revive the person at the time they left the place with the peasant, probably going to the nearest hospital.

The man walked back to the food outlet and by the time he reaches there his food order is ready. He collected it from the counter and started walking to his place. He lives nearby the open market area and he normally walks home from there.

It's almost the night time and he is walking in an empty road which is very quiet during this time of the day. While he was walking he was having a moment of his own and started talking to his own self regarding the incident he just witnessed at the market.

[The Man]

“If an animal got lost in the jungle and couldn’t find any food or water in time, that one might die out of thirst and hunger.”

“Otherwise it might die out of old age.”

“That is normal and natural. No one can help it at all. No one to be blamed.”

“A man who is lost in a jungle who doesn’t know how to survive might also die out of hunger and thirst.”

“Otherwise he might die out of old age as well.”

“But a man drops dead in the middle of an open market where almost all the foods and drinks in the world are getting sold!”

“How come I can’t blame anyone for that?”

“I can’t even think of anyone to be blamed”

“I can’t blame the manager who refused to give the man some food.”

“I can’t blame the man’s friends and relatives for not caring for him.”

“I can’t blame the government for not looking after him.”

“But it seems not right.”

“It is not natural at all.”

“Animals depends on food and water and only way they can die is not finding a source in time. If everything is there then only way they can die is out of old anger or becoming a prey to another predator. There is no way an animal dies just because it has no money to buy food.”

“A man can die middle of a place where everything is there but not having money to buy anything.”

“And that is fair?”

“Even I can’t argue against it! How screwed I am?”

“No one in that market is a predator. Predators doesn’t kill for fun, they kill to survive. Then they eat what they killed. So someone survived out of another one’s death.”

“But a man who drops dead middle of an open market is no one’s prey. No one killed him per se. No one wants to eat him. No one survives out of that man’s death.”

“That man died for nothing!”

“It’s just he had no money to buy any food or water.”

“A man died because he doesn’t have coins and notes or a card of some sort.”

“And he died middle of somewhere the food and drinks are plenty. A place where food and drinks are stored that is more than enough to feed the whole area for few weeks.”

“He didn’t have what it takes to eat from anywhere he wants or to be a predator to kill a prey and eat it. It didn’t have what it takes to sneak in there and steal from someone who has enough or to take what he needs forcefully from someone in there.”

“For that he died.”

“Yes, we are human. We are not animals!”

“I know that idiot.”

“But aren’t what happened to day is a disgrace to whole humanity?”

“Is this who we are?”

“Claimed land over the entire world and no one is free to take what they want even when they need it the most.”

“How screwed are we?”

The man was angry but at the same time knew he had no easy answer for that. He is part of the society he lives in and he worked for it. Knowing that the money is the culprit, he too worked for it and considered it as his master. He was how come someone work for such a thing and still hold is head high without being ashamed of it. He didn't know the answer and he knew he can't do anything about it.

He reached his apartment and entered it. Once he is in there all he wanted is to take a shower and have his dinner. He didn't think about it again since then.

The man walk up the next morning and visited the city for a walk. He wanted to clear his mind after life changing events happened yesterday. He looks tiered as he struggled to sleep all night, thinking about the life and its meaning. However, he couldn't get over it. He continued to walk while thinking about everything.

He was walking along the street and he felt a little tired. There was an abandoned building nearby, he headed towards the building. It was a considerably large building,

not sure why it was abandoned, it seems like a well-maintained building.

He sat down on the staircase at the entrance to the building. He was tired and there were a lot of things going on in his head. His mind was wandering around, thinking about everything, what should have happened, the worst and best case scenarios. On top of that he was hearing voices in his head, not sure who or why just voices disturbing his thoughts. He was tired and felt like he had enough. But it didn't stop, he was struggling with a headache it causes for a while.

Suddenly everything stopped. He felt relieved, no voices, no thoughts, no wandering around, a peaceful feeling. He loved the tranquillity it brought to him, he was suddenly content. He felt sleepy and he lied down on the staircase. He was happy, like the rain suddenly stopped, he was enjoying the few quiet moments he had in years. He felt it like few hours, but actually, it was just a few minutes. Finally, he closed his eyes with contentment he felt.

And never opened his eyes again.

A Municipal Council vehicle found his body. Council arranged a funeral as no one was there to claim the body. Suddenly, on the second day, a lady showed up claiming to be his next of kin, out of nowhere. A cousin from his mother's side. People who arranged the funeral was a bit happy because now they have someone to give the responsibility of the body and do the rest of the legal work pretty easily.

The one who is in charge with the funeral, a man from the Municipal Council, approached her and said,

[The Funeral Manager]

"Excuse me! madam, may I talk to for few minutes. I'm the one who is responsible for his body at this moment"

[The Lady]

"Oh! Yes, sure"

[The Funeral Manager]

"Thanks! Would you mind taking over the arrangements from now on?"

[The Lady]

“What do I have to do?”

[The Funeral Manager]

“Some legal things. Few documents to sign and I may need your proof of identity and some documents to prove your connection to this person”

[The Lady]

“Sure!”

The legal work went well and, she was a real cousin of his. According to her, it’s been a long time since she saw him the last time. Seems like she was well connected and keeping an eye on his whereabouts.

[The Funeral Manager]

“Thank you, madam. You may take over the arrangements now. What do you want us to do?”

[The Lady]

“Nothing much, what were you planning to do with his body?”

[The Funeral Manager]

“We were planning to keep the body in the funeral area for few days and bury the body in the cemetery nearby. Do you want the body to be transferred to your place?”

[The Lady]

“No. Not really. Can you carry out the plan as it is and bury his body afterwards”

[The Funeral Manager]

“Yes, but since now you are here, you may have to take the responsibility and pay for the services. I can arrange that.”

[The Lady]

“Pay for the services?”

[The Funeral Manager]

“Yes, madam. For the coffin, location to bury, for the ceremony and transportation. There may be some few things here and there but those were the main. You might need to pay a fixed amount to the cemetery each year for the maintenance. That’s all.”

[The Lady]

“Didn’t he had anything to cover the expense? His assets or anything?”

[The Funeral Manager]

“No, apparently he had nothing for himself. Few cents in his bank accounts and no will either. Also, it seems like he had taken some money from some people. Actually, he was in debt at the time of his death”

[The Lady]

“Oh! The guy is dead and I’m the one who has to pay for his funeral. And you telling me I’m going to get a bill each year for maintenance?”

[The Funeral Manager]

“Something like that!”

[The Lady]

“I don’t have much money either and obviously I’m not going to pay all bills after this. Is there anything else we could do?”

[The Funeral Manager]

“Seems like you were not that close. Anyway, did he wanted to be buried?”

[The Lady]

“I think so, at least that was his family tradition as I know.”

[The Funeral Manager]

“OK, but since you are the only one here, we can cremate the body and you may keep the ashed if you want or bury wherever you want”

[The Lady]

“That’s a good idea. I don’t mind what he wanted, let’s cremate the body and get over with it.”

[The Funeral Manager]

“Sure. I’ll arrange the paperwork and give you the receipt. You may pay the amount to municipal council tariff office, and we can go ahead after that.”

[The Lady]

“Sure, please make it quick, I have to go back home a bit early today.”

[The Funeral Manager]

“I’ll do my best.”

[The Lady]

“Thanks”

Few days after his death, he was cremated and ashes were given to his cousin. Cost of funeral and cremation process was paid by the cousin. A few days later, she took care of the ashes by getting rid of it while she was travelling along a coastal area and no one mentioned about him since then.

Everyone moved on like he never existed.

About The Author

Nuwan Wijayaweera (1984) was born in Kurunegala, Sri Lanka. He is a Sri Lankan IT professional who worked for various Sri Lankan and Australian companies since 2008. He wrote posts and articles since 2014 and he has written many blog posts since then. Now he is working on his first major book, which contains logs from his life events and his personal philosophy towards life.